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(54) Amusement-with-prizes machines

(57) A coin operated quiz machine presents a series of questions on a video screen and offers the player a number of possible answers, selectable by pressing an associated button. Successive correct answers build up a score, which may be based on snooker scoring with easy one point questions corresponding to red balls and two to seven point questions of graded difficulty to the coloured balls. "Breaks" greater than certain set values generate prizes, but the prizes vary according to what is in a prize fund accumulated from coins paid in at least before any pay-in to trigger that particular game. The time to answer questions may also vary according to the level of the prize fund.

SPECIFICATION

"Improvements relating to amusement-with-prizes machines"

- 5 This invention relates to amusement-with-prizes machines. It is primarily intended to be applied to a quiz game where a player, after insertion of a coin or token, is presented with a series of questions, and as he answers them correctly so a score is built up. The attainment of a certain score or scores generates an award of a prize. However, it would be applicable to other machines where the player is set some form of target. 5
- According to the present invention there is provided an amusement-with-prizes machine wherein the
- 10 attainment by a player of one or more fixed targets generates a prize award, and wherein the amount of the prize is calculated on the basis of the target achieved and of a prize fund within the machine, the prize fund varying in relationship to the amount paid in and the amount paid out in prizes in previous games. 10
- Thus, if the fund is low, prizes will generally be low, while if it is high, the prizes will be correspondingly higher.
- 15 The amount paid in directly preceding a game will preferably not contribute to the prize fund from which an award may be paid at the conclusion of that game. Indeed the pay-in may be held back from the prize fund for more than one game. This ensures that the player cannot "buy" a better prize by building up that fund immediately in advance. 15
- Generally, a proportion only of what is paid in is allocated to the prize fund; the rest is retained by the
- 20 machine and eventually collected by the proprietor. 20
- It will be preferred that the machine will give an indication as to what prizes are available if certain targets are achieved during a particular game. This would be changed as and when the prize fund varied. There could also be a permanent indication of the maximum prizes available, although these would only be paid out if the prize fund was over its highest threshold.
- 25 In one preferred form the or each target is only attainable by a player meeting a plurality of challenges, failure to meet any such challenge concluding that game. Means may be provided to enable the player to select challenges of different difficulty or skill levels. In particular these challenge levels may be in relationship to scoring in the game of snooker, a lowest level challenge corresponding to a red ball, and this, if achieved, allowing the player to select any higher level challenge. This in turn, if achieved would allow the player to 25
- 30 return to the lowest level challenge, and so on. 30
- In an preferred form it is a quiz machine, the challenge being questions, with player operable means for selecting an answer from a plurality offered by the machine.
- There will generally be a time limit for the attainment of a target or challenge, and this may be variable in relationship to the prize fund.
- 35 For a better understanding of the invention one embodiment will now be described, by way of example. 35
- A machine poses questions to a player and offers a selection of possible answers, these conveniently being shown on a video screen. The possible answers are labelled, say A, B, C and D, and the player has available a corresponding set of buttons marked accordingly. His choice of answer is made by pressing the button with the associated letter. If that answer is correct then the player is awarded a point or several points, which may
- 40 be shown on the screen or some other indicator. The player can then attempt another question, and so on until either he gets one wrong or a limit of time or points total set by the machine is reached. This limit or failure to answer any question correctly completes the game and the amount of points then standing to the player determines the prize awarded, if any. 40
- The pattern of questions and the points awarded for correct answers may be related to the game of snooker.
- 45 Thus, the player may first be asked a "red" question which will be fairly easy and score a single point. To continue his break, he must then answer a more difficult question, and he can choose the level of difficulty through six coloured grades, yellow, green, brown, blue, pink and black. Correspondingly coloured buttons may be provided by which the selection can be made. Thus, a successful answer to a "brown" question will bring four points, for example, while a "pink" will net six points. 45
- 50 Assuming that is successfully accomplished, the player returns to a simple "red" question, and if that is answered correctly he can then choose another colour, and so on. 50
- The game is initiated by the player putting money or tokens into the machine. This will have a prize fund and a reserve, and the prize fund initially will not be affected by any coins entered. They will simply enable play to commence. Thus the eventual prize is the same whether the player just puts in one coin or dozens, the latter
- 55 in anticipation of playing a corresponding number of games. But as the player answers questions and builds up a break, so his prize increases as he passes various target scores. The prize is related to what was in the bank or prize fund at the start. If this was low, then any prize awarded will also be low, but as the fund increases, so the prizes available increase. There is set out below a table showing what prizes may be won for certain breaks for various levels in the bank or prize fund. At the base of each column there is a time for 55
- 60 answering each question, which may also be a variable factor. Thus, when the prize fund is low, the player may be given a shorter time to answer each question than when it is high. The figures in the table are of course examples only, and they are capable of almost infinite variation. 60
- At the start, the machine will display the ranges of prizes currently available. As play progresses, the machine may also indicate the prize the player is standing to win as each question is answered, but preferably
- 65 it will just show the points scored. When the game is completed, it will pay out any prize won. This will be the 65

amount standing against the particular break achieved and it will not be cumulative of that and the prizes for the lesser breaks already passed.

BANK									5	
5	BREAK	0 or --	0--+£1	+£1--+£2	+£2--+£3	+£3--+£4	+£4--+£5	+£5--+£10	£10+	
	9-15	--	50p	50p	50p	£1	£1	£1	£2	
	16-24	50p	£1	£1	£1	£2	£3	£3	£4	
	25-34	£1	£1.50p	£2	£2	£3	£5	£5	£6	
10	35-44	£1.50p	£2	£3	£4	£4	£6	£7	£8	10
	45-54	£2	£3	£4	£5	£5	£7	£10	£10	
	55-64	£3	£4	£5	£6	£6	£8	--	--	
	65-74	£5	£5	£7	£8	£8	£10	--	--	
	75	£10	£10	£10	£10	£10	--	--	--	
15	TIME (SECS)	8	8	10	10	15	15	20	20	15

As the pay out is made, the prize fund will be depleted, but it will also be made up to a certain extent by the coins paid in before the game commences, or at least some of them. It can be arranged that a proportion of all coins paid in are diverted to a reserve, ultimately for the proprietor while the remainder are devoted to the prize fund. Thus, for the next game, the prize fund may be quite different, and the player achieving the same score may not receive the same award.

CLAIMS

1. An amusement-with-prizes machine wherein the attainment by a player of one or more fixed targets generates a prize award, and wherein the amount of the prize is calculated on the basis of the target achieved and of a prize fund within the machine, the prize fund varying in relationship to the amount paid in and the amount paid out in prizes in previous games.
2. A machine as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the amount paid in directly preceding a game does not contribute to the prize fund from which an award may be paid at the conclusion of that game.
3. A machine as claimed in Claim 2, wherein each amount paid in is held back from the prize fund for a plurality of games.
4. A machine as claimed in Claim 1 or 3, wherein a proportion of what is paid in is allocated to the prize fund, the remainder being retained by the machine.
5. A machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the machine gives an indication as to what prizes are available if certain targets are achieved during a particular game.
6. A machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein there is a permanent indication of the maximum prizes available.
7. A machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the or each target is only attainable by a player meeting a plurality of challenges, failure to meet any such challenge concluding that game.
8. A machine as claimed in Claim 7, wherein means are provided enabling the player to select challenges of different difficulty or skill levels.
9. A machine as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the challenge levels are in relationship to scoring in the game of snooker, a lowest level challenge corresponding to a red ball, if achieved, allowing the player to select any higher level challenge, this in turn, if achieved, allowing the player to return to the lowest level challenge and so on.
10. A machine as claimed in any one of Claims 7 to 9, being a quiz machine, wherein the challenges are questions and there are player operable means for selecting an answer from a plurality offered by the machine.
11. A machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein there is a time limit for the attainment of a target or challenge.
12. A machine as claimed in Claim 10, wherein the time limit is variable in relationship to the prize fund.